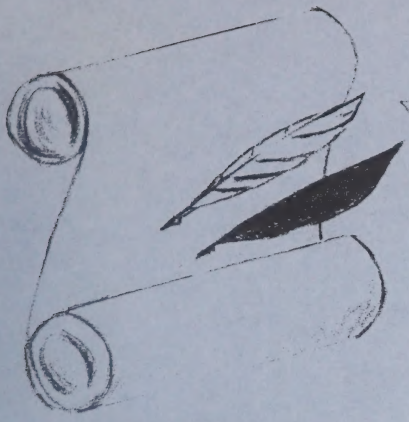

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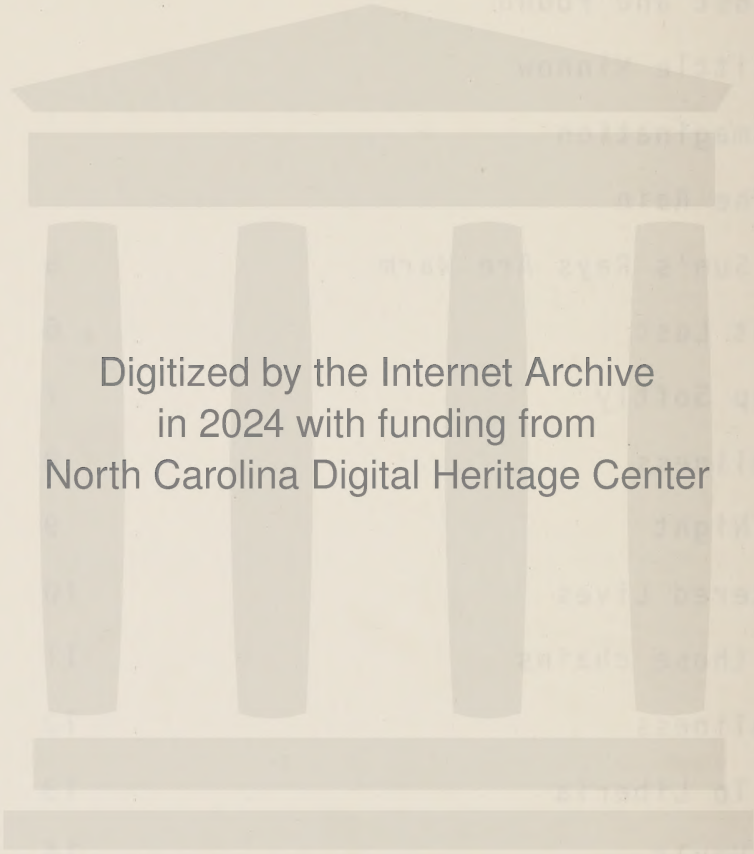

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Japanese Haikus

Your world, little girl
Of sticky hands, ragged doll,
Breaks too soon to dawn.

by Linda Harris

God--"Lost and Found" is
His name; Lost in happiness,
And Found in sorrow.

by Henrietta Emerson

Little minnow whose
Life's as valuable as mine,
Yet snatched without thought.

by Nancy Lindsay

Imagination---
Smoke ascending to the clouds,
Witch steps to Heaven.

by Donna Crowder

The rain pats visions
Into form like deft fingers
On a piano.

by Cathey Rodgers

P o e m s

The Sun's Rays are Warm

by Henrietta Emerson

I gathered the rays of the sun
And tucked them into a pocket of my heart.
There they remained,
Melting the coldness
And thawing the hardness
Of my whole being.
I gathered the rays of the sun
And let the ice and the stone disappear,
And I was happy.

Light Lost

by

Henrietta Emerson

Light lost--
  I have covered it
With my own hands.
It was shining brightly,
  But too brightly, so that
It blinded me.
The light was too strong--
  I would rather have
The darkness.
So I covered the light
  With my own hands;
Light lost--forever.

Creep Softly ...

by

Martha Fugate

Creep softly from the dark world
To the dawn of aloneness,
Creep steeply from the kingdom of companions
To the soft slope of silent shadows,
Startle to the hum of a new day's sound.
You are the conqueror,
  The king,
  The friendly peacemaker of the world,
And this is your reign--
  Eternity.

Loneliness

by

Terrell Seawell

What is loneliness?
Loneliness is an emptiness,
A longing for something
Which is not.
It is a feeling
Of the deepest despair
A human can know.

Loneliness is the innate knowledge
That you alone must
Live your life--
Sigh your sighs,
Bear your griefs,
And cry your tears--
Alone.

Loneliness is a friend
Saying, "I do not understand."
It is a lover
Revealing, "I no longer love."
It is a father
Explaining to an unknowing son
His life.
It is an individual
Standing alone with
His convictions.
It is a mother
Telling her children,
"Your father is dead."
It is the Suffering Christ
Crying from the Cross,
"Father forgive them."

WHAT IS LONELINESS?
It is an emptiness,
A longing for something
Which is not.
It is a feeling
Of the deepest despair
A human can know.
Loneliness is life.

The Night

by

Henrietta Emerson

After the helter-skeltering
  Of the madly-rushed day,
Comes the peaceful quietness
  of the night.
It slowly creeps down,
  Covering all the world
With a tranquility unknown to any
  During the light of the day.
It fondly embraces me
  With its far-reaching arms;
And it holds me close,
  Filling me with a silent sense of security.
It muffles all sounds so that I can hear
  Only the faint beat of my heart
As I feel the beauty of nature so close
  That it encircles my body,
Wrapping around my feet
  And taking hold of my hands,
Trying to lead me into a new insight
  Into the wonders of our world.

Filtered Lives

by

Lynn Ford

The world is full of people
Wrapped in cheap paper outsides,
Filled with mixtures of emotion and questions
about life.
Slowly, burning down in a puff of smoke.
Lives are encircled with sin--
Sins filtered with lies, hate, and selfishness.
Then almost too soon
That life dwindles down to the last spark of
existence..
Dies out...and is crushed in some gutter to be
forgotten.

Tie those chains ...

by

Martha Fugate

tie those chains
secure.
sweeping as relentless as the tides of fate,
the restlessness comes to shore
to wash away and take a steal rider,
rider of devil bronco waves
  of fear and pain,
of laughs, of empty beers, of
     THOUGHT.
steal the damn of restlessness,
the damned, the damned fighters
of this dead world,
this senile world.
tie those chains
secure.
tie those chains,
or you may ride the wave,
while the restlessness
comes to shore.

Loneliness

by

Henrietta Emerson

Loneliness--everywhere.
  I cannot escape it.
It is always here--
  Laughing up at me,
Screaming in my face,
  Gnawing at my stomach,
Wrapping its arms around me and
  Crushing me
So that I have no energy to
  Fight back.
Loneliness--
  All-powerful
        Clinging
Loneliness.

Ode To Liberia

by

Diane Jones

A thousand undulating currents did meet
And form the side and multi-colored sea.
Black eyes looked down in weary defeat,
A lonely and dark people were we.
To settle was the pilgrim's creed
Lo! we watched from fetter's brace,
The view of the homeland was for this breed
A chant from heaven!... God's good grace.
Our formidable voyage is over at last!
And we lived unconquered still
And to the sea the chains were cast
For surely we had done God's will.
Break! break! against the ocean wall.
Freedom beckons each..., us all.

The Vault

by

Bebe Grady

Are you, impregnable vault of delicately-
carved teak and balsom,
Hoarding cherished dreams, priceless ambitions,
and leather-bound thoughts
Or dumbly facading mute passions,
aspirations, and tarnished virtue?

An expert safecracker, I employ a combination--
two smiles, three questions, one kiss--
in vain.
Can other feminine fingers open you?
Or does the Vault-maker guard your key?

To a Friend

by

Sallie Crawford

Is it but a hollow void
To slip so dreary by?
Is it but a mystic dream
To have so slight a tie?

Do we speak from without
And know not from within?
Do we see such sunlight
Because of dead black dens?

Do we know so much
That knowledge has no hold,
That whimsical emotions
Have our fate controlled?

Do we see our wealth so shallow
As to mesmerize,
To build our little fortune
To such gigantic size?

Can I take your hand
Without a doubtful reach?
Can I keep you on your way
Without seeming to preach?

Can we see beyond
The web so gray and thin
To create something stronger
Than has ever been?

S h o r t S t o r i e s

THE LITTLE GIRL IN THE FOURTH BED

by
Linnelle Cline

She had not meant to be a thief. But then none of us do, yet all of us are stealing time and other people's laughter. Thieves, For "What is mine is mine and what is thine is mine."

It began with her growing up. For seven is grown up when all you have been before is six or five or even four. She was wondering about things and wanting things unseen, unknown, as grownups want. Most of all she wanted to know who she was. All she was, was the little girl in the fourth bed from the fire door, a little girl in the looking glass.

Kim went to the washstand and looked at the little girl in the looking glass. She had big, brown eyes and black, black hair; there was not any curl to it, but it had a shine like shoes on Sunday. She pounded on the glass with her fists, "Who are you? Are

you pretty or ugly, fat or thin? Don't you love your little girl, or are you sick or lost? Why can't I know you? For I want to; I want to belong to you!"

But the little girl in the looking glass only pounded back with her fists.

Kim knew she could not wait another day, and she ran to ask Miss Watson about her mother. For Miss Watson would have to answer her now that she was seven. She could not say, as she had before, that Kim was too little to understand. For Kim knew about being poor, and sick, and lost; she was as old as that. So Miss Watson would have to say if Kim's mama was too poor or too sick. That was what most of the mothers were. So their children lived in the Home until they got well.

The big girls said you could not have the smallest secret without Miss Watson finding it out. Miss Watson looked like a witch, and she was not anybody's mother. She was just there to tell you what to do, what not to do, make rules and discover secrets.

She looked at Kim looking at her, and said, "Kim, your mother is dead."

Kim knew it was a lie. She pounded on Miss Watson. "Why do you keep me from her?" All other girls have mothers! Why can't I have mine?"

She said, "You're not old enough to understand how things can't always be the way we want them."

Kim knew Miss Watson knew where her mother was. She was in the filing cabinets.

When Kim left, Miss Watson said, "I must learn to lie better." Kim didn't cry very long. For she knew what she was going to do. The only trouble was she could not read. Then Gladys came by. Gladys was ten, and she was here because her mother was sick in the hospital.

Kim asked Gladys if she could read, Gladys said, "Of course I can read."

"Can you keep a secret?"

Gladys looked interested. "From whom?"

"From everybody."

"That can't be done. Miss Watson would find out."

"Would you tell her?"

"No"

"Then how would she find out?"

"Because she always does."

"I have secrets she hasn't found out."

"You have, what are they?"

"Cross your heart and hope to die and never visit the moon if you tell?"

"I have the secret that I want to know who I am, and I'm going to.I have the secret that every night when Miss Watson takes her bath, she lays her keys on the bed table, and I'm going to take them and look in the filing cabinet."

"You'd be skinned alive."

"Why? My mother is mine, isn't she? I have a right to her, don't I? I'm her little girl."

"But the keys are Miss Watson's!"

"She won't know. She takes long baths, and it won't take you long to read my mother's name and address."

"Me?" said Gladys. "When do you want to do it?"

"Tonight."

Kim was first in bed that night. Miss Watson noticed that, for she always came to say good night to everyone. She kissed Kim to see if she had a fever, but all she had was eyes. They were the eyes of a little girl with a delicious secret.

Miss Watson laid her keys on her night table.Then she got her slippers and gown and robe and a new book on child psychology. She went into the bathroom and closed the door.

Kim heard the door shut. Then she hardly dared breathe as she slipped down the hall and into Miss Watson's bedroom; Kim tiptoed to the table and got the keys. She ran to Miss Watson's office. Gladys was waiting by

the cabinets.

The sixth key opened the cabinets. In the box with her name on it there were goods. Kim picked something up; it was a baby's slip. And on each shoulder was a little pin with four pretend pearls.

Kim said, "A mother would have to love her baby very much to buy such fine pins."

Kim picked up a shopping bag and unfolded it. On the outside was printed, NOBODY BUT NOBODY

Then Kim knew she would never find out who she was or who her mother or father was.

Gladys said, "Kim, you were abandoned." But Kim did not know what abandoned meant. Gladys told Kim that abandoned meant something you don't want and you throw it away like trash. "You were put in a bag like trash, too," Gladys said.

The little girl in the fourth bed from the fire door, the little girl in a looking glass, was a little girl who had been thrown away. And that was too much to know.

HAPPINESS IS....

By Linda Harris

Happiness is different things to different people.When I was five happiness was a safe puppy.His name was Happy.I picked that name for him because his eyes looked so very sad the day I brought him home with me.Happy had been the last of my next door neighbor's litter of puppies. No one seemed to want him, except for me. I remember eagerly embracing the black clump of soft fur and promising him that he could come and live with me and that I would make him happy. For weeks he yelped pitifully at night until I would sneak out the back door and take him up to my room. Happy would put his fuzzy little head on the pillow beside mine and fall fast asleep. He was always happy when I was near him. I think he liked the warm milk I gave him in a bowl just shallow enough and the way I tickled his fat stomach. We would play together in the orchard behind my house and Happy soon

acted happy, until I would hear Mama calling me to wash my hands for supper. Happy then would become very still. His tail would sag to the ground. His enormous black eyes would stare at me pathetically.

Soon Happy and I were inseparable. If there ever was a time he wasn't with me, I knew exactly where he would be. An old colored man and his wife lived in a one-room hut behind our house. I remember how much Happy and I loved sitting around the wood fire on cold winter days. Aunt Jenny always had a big oatmeal cookie waiting for me in the cracked cookie jar I had given her for Christmas one year. And she would give Happy a big piece of fat back. So whenever Happy wasn't playfully nipping at my heels, I could bet that he would be curled up behind the wood stove at Aunt Jenny's and Uncle Will's. One gray, drizzly, early-spring morning I stayed up in my room to play with my new set of Sears and Roebuck paper dolls. I was

shaken out of my dream world when I heard Uncle Will banging on our back door and crying pitifully, "Please come - - ma house gwine burn damn down." I ran downstairs and out the door. The sky was crimson and scarlet with a black ominous background. The scorching flames were leaping heavenward. They made me hot. Aunt Jenny and Uncle Will were frantically and haphazardly tossing what few belongings they had away from the mass of flames. I saw the cookie jar fall to the ground in a million pieces. I saw the old eyes of the two old darkies I loved. I grabbed a leaky bucket, filled it to overflowing and tearfully threw it into the flames. But the shack piece by piece became smoldering embers. Aunt Jenny and Uncle Will stood side by side looking at all they had lying in nothingness around them. It was all a nightmare, just like the one I had had the other night when I dreamed Happy was missing.

Happy! A cold chill ran over my body

and the ruins in front of me swam. Happy! I had forgotten him until that moment. Poor Happy! Where could he be? Panic and heartbreak seized me when I called and he did not run playfully to me. Then I knew that because I had not played with him all morning he must have found security and love at Aunt Jenny's and Uncle Will's. And he must have wondered why I never came to find him so we could play hide and seek - - - we liked to play that game in the rain. Happy thought I had forgotten him, and now he's gone - -

Uncle Will stooped and opened the charred door of the old stove. I saw him through my tears bringing a black, shivering handful of fur toward me. And I saw, too, a time-worn heartbroken man who remembered even in his terror that for a five year old happiness is a safe puppy.

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